1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

Chapter 6 The Political Rank Path

668 In the 1930's, political events external to Santal society began
114 to alter profoundly the path that the Santal were treading. What one observes today instead of acculturation and assimilation is a native sociocultural resurgence, but one filled with
[123] apparently paradoxical elements. Though I was unaware of it at the time, the first Santal I met in Jamshedpur confronted me in the course of a few weeks with all of the fundamental questions which this resurgence poses. To introduce these questions I will recount this experience, and with the benefit of hindsight, suggest the directions which answers to the questions posed will take.

It was October of 1957 when I arrived at Jamshedpur, and the city was preparing for Durga Puja, the most elaborately
115 celebrated Hindu festival in Jamshedpur. Company officials had thoughtfully provided me with my first Santal informant, clearly a good model of Company efforts in behalf of tribals. Mr. F. came to Jamshedpur with a high-school education and received further training in the TISCO apprentice school. He had served for fifteen years in the brick kiln works and was

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

then in line for promotion to assistant supervisor. His work record was excellent, including an award of Rs. 25 and special commendation for having suggested an improvement in the brick-making process. Fortunately for me, Mr. F. spoke adequate English in addition to excellent Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, and three Mundari languages—his own (Santal), Ho, and Mundari.

I was impressed with his intelligence and noticed that he seemed highly acculturated, though at that early stage of our relationship I could not point to specific Hindu practices which marked this acculturation; it was rather an impression based upon bearing and gesture. Later my impression of Mr. F.'s Hinduization was repeatedly confirmed. I learned that he had been sent to live with a Brahmin family as a small boy. I recall a discussion among Mr. F., five other Santal, and me in which the rites of Santal local lineages were discussed; Mr. F. alone insisted that the rites of some lineages, especially his own, were purer and higher than those of other lineages. The other Santal present argued in traditional Santal fashion that each thinks his own lineage best but that none is better than any other. The strongest confirmation of my impression is that it is shared by less acculturated Santal. One young man who had married a relative of Mr. F. refused to visit Mr. F., despite the urging of his wife, who had lived for some years in Mr. F.'s house and wished to visit. It was this young man who remarked that Mr. F. was so much like a *diku*, that "before him I feel like a black Santal."

But it was not Mr. F.'s acculturation which puzzled me. The literature on acculturation of Indian tribals is replete with such cases and we are not without some knowledge of the basis of this acculturation. It was rather the vehemence of his objection to Santal attendance and participation in the Durga Puja cere-

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

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monies which I could not account for. He told me that the celebration was a "lure and a trap for tribals." When I asked him if other Santal felt similarly he described the manner in which word against attendance and participation was being spread throughout the area by Santal and other tribal headmen and men of influence. Surprisingly, he and his family attended the ceremonies and so did a number of other Santal from the city and surrounding countryside, including workers from the *bustees*. The word, however, had been circulated among tribals that they should not attend and should under no conditions participate by performing group dances or becoming possessed, as was their custom. Some did refrain from attendance as urged, and no tribals performed group dances or became possessed.

Why should Mr. F., one of the most acculturated Santal, vehemently oppose tribal attendance and participation in the Hindu celebration? It seemed to me that the most acculturated would surely be most in favor of acculturation. I asked Mr. F. why he opposed attendance and participation. He said, "It is bad for Santal and other tribals to be present because they are mostly 'ignorant' people and on such occasions are taken advantage of by numerous Hindus who wheedle away their earnings." While this explanation justified his own attendance since he is not "ignorant," taken at face value it hardly seems to account for the organized opposition to tribal attendance and the particular emphasis against participation in the ceremonies. In addition Mr. F.'s fears that his fellow tribals would be gulled by the Hindus seemed inappropriate, since most of the tribals of the area who might attend were either workers in daily contact with Hindus or farmers who live near Jamshedpur, or villagers who run the risk of being swindled

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 weekly at various markets. Santal attendance at Durga Puja could hardly present Hindus with unprecedented opportunities to take advantage of tribals. Nevertheless, as I shall show later, a less literal interpretation of Mr. F.'s remarks accounts rather well, at least in part, for his opposition.

668 An event a few days after the Durga Puja provides some clues about Mr. F.'s opposition. He came to see me and to return a book on the Santal which he had borrowed. I asked what he thought of the book and he said, "It is very bad; it says that 'aboriginals' (*ādibāsī*; Hindi) only progress when in the presence of Hindus. For example, it says that we have borrowed 'vermilion' from the Hindus when we think it is they who have borrowed it from us." I asked him to show me those portions of the book to which he took exception, and he pointed to the section dealing with acculturation. He was somewhat mistaken in attributing to the author an attitude favoring acculturation; both his limited command of English and his knowledge of the predominant Hindu position regarding acculturation probably influenced his interpretation. Mr. F. was not willing to let the matter rest with the mere comment that the book was bad, and he caused me some alarm by proposing to read the portions of the book he opposed before the local branch of the tribal Jharkhand political party. His objective was to obtain a declaration of protest against the book to be forwarded to the Central Government. It is not now important that I managed to dissuade him from such action. But that a sophisticated Santal could contemplate such action suggests institutionalized opposition to acculturation. It further suggests a connection between this opposition and political objectives. It was only later that I learned that the Jharkhand party had spearheaded the drive to prevent tribal attendance and partici-

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 115 pation at the Durga Puja festival. One acculturated Santal opposing acculturation is a mystery which the anthropologist, with his concern for custom, might choose to ignore; but I met such acculturated Santal everywhere, and they proved the most militant opponents of acculturation; indeed, the least militant proved to be the least acculturated and most isolated villagers. The ordinary Santal, a little behind the times, were just getting on to emulation while the elite maneuvered a volte-face. Events of the 1930's explain this change.

175 668 With the approach of independence in the 1930's a new political rank path opened. The British Raj was gradually relinquishing power, and it became evident to sophisticated observers that the days of the princely rulers of Mayurbhanj, Seraikela, and Kharswan were numbered. The day of democratic election was dawning in India. In the north, with headquarters in Ranchi, the Oxford-educated and Christian Munda, Jai Pal Singh, organized an "aboriginal" political party. The proclaimed aim of the party was and is to establish a tribally dominated state within the Indian Union. Such a state would include the geographical area known as the Chotanagpur Plateau and roughly referred to in Indian literature as the Jharkhand. It would include much of southern Bihar, northern Orissa and a thin slice of the western portion of West Bengal. In such a state, which incidentally would contain Jamshedpur and some of the richest mineral deposits in India, tribal peoples would be in a near majority.

The "likenesses" shared by the Mundari-speaking peoples who comprise most of the tribal population of the Jharkhand were available as cultural cement. In the north, Jai Pal successfully brought together the Mundari-speaking Munda and Santal as well as the Dravidian-speaking Oraon, who had long lived

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

175 • 668 among the Munda and adopted many Mundari traits. In the south he was able to convince the leading members of the Santal and Ho elite to join his political movement. Numerous consultations and meetings were held, a party organization was established near Jamshedpur, and campaigns were planned for Singhbhum and Mayurbhanj. Not only were there political offices of considerable power to fill by democratic elections, but there were a number of special reserved seats for "aboriginals." The rise of Jai Pal and his Jharkhand party meant that the Santal had to make a choice between joining a Hindu-dominated party such as the Congress party or supporting an "aboriginal" party of their own. A substantial majority have continuously decided on the latter course.

668 The initiative to join politically with other tribals has come primarily from the elite. In a tribally-dominated state they envisage themselves as occupying the most powerful positions with unprecedented opportunity for personal and tribal rank improvement. Political democracy reawakened the old dreams of independence and power. While the leading emulators were the Santal traditional and newly educated elite, and the latter most conspicuously alienated from their fellows with respect to culture, neither could look upon the social encroachment of Hindu society with favor. They, above all, had a vested interest in traditional social positions of power and prestige and therefore most to lose from such encroachment. Furthermore, even had they wished to lead their people into a Hindu-dominated political movement, it is doubtful that they would have been able to bring along the mass of uneducated and relatively unacculturated Santal, particularly in competition with a specifically tribal political organization. The fear and hatred of the *diku* are not easily exorcised. A few elite Santal

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

• 668 have sought to further their careers by bringing their fellows into the Congress party, but their success has been extremely limited and the personal price they have been made to pay has been enormous. Some of these need fear for their lives outside the confines of their own village.

Since its inception the Jharkhand party has succeeded in electing many candidates to the state legislatures of Bihar and Orissa. In Bihar, after the election of 1956 the Jharkhand party emerged as second only to the Congress in number of seats; in Orissa enough representatives were elected to make Jharkhand support necessary for any party in power to stay in power. A few members have been elected to the *Lok Sabha*, the Indian equivalent of the House of Commons. Though the Jharkhand party has improved its position in each election it failed during the course of the states' reorganization after independence to achieve a Jharkhand state. Nevertheless, this remains the ostensible aim of the party. In practice the party works for such special benefits for "aboriginals" as scholarships, increased opportunities in industry, wells and irrigation facilities, etc. In a small way there have been accomplishments, and no doubt the efforts of the Jharkhand party have made a difference; fortunately for (and perhaps as a concession to) the party, the official Congress position is also to "raise the level" of the aboriginals by precisely the means favored by the Jharkhand party. In fact, the most effective complaint of the Jharkhand against the Congress has been the latter's hostility to a Jharkhand state rather than opposition to specific tribal welfare measures.

Most of the elective offices have been filled by the educated elite. Coveted positions within the party are also largely held by such acculturated Santal, with the lower officials and unpaid

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

• 668 volunteers drawn from all levels of the society. There are, therefore, abundant immediate rewards to be derived from the political movement in addition to the dreams of power and glory in an "aboriginal" state. Besides the economic and prestige awards stemming from political action there are newly discovered rewards which are derived from a cultural creativity closely connected with political objectives.

Jamshedpur and industrial employment have been shown to have increased both the incentive and the opportunity for education. In the absence of a political rank path, i.e., prior to the 1930's, the effect of this increase in education was seen to be essentially divisive and as accelerating already existing centrifugal tendencies. But now the educated Santal are those most capable of becoming leaders in the Jharkhand movement. Since Jamshedpur and its environs have relatively many educated Santal, it is one of the areas where Jharkhand activity is most intense. It is also, of course, an area where tribals are densely concentrated and thus an opportune point for political headquarters. A building to serve as the headquarters of the Jharkhand party within the southern portion of the Chotanagpur Plateau has been built just outside Jamshedpur, incidentally with financial aid from the astute TISCO officials, who also contribute substantially to the Congress. Major mass meetings which attract not only the bulk of the tribal working force, but also villagers from as far away as southern Mayurbhanj, are held near a Santal *bustee* just beyond Jamshedpur. One TISCO worker from a *bustee* has achieved the coveted position of Member of the Bihar Legislative Assembly (MLA). Many other *bustee* dwellers are active party workers, and the recent burst of cultural creativity is particularly vital around Jamshedpur.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 Jamshedpur has further contributed to the new political movement and the new solidarity by the characteristics of its own rank path. The first of these characteristics, even prior to the present period, must have mitigated the centrifugal tendencies present and may even have affected the decision of the
668 Santal elite to support the Jharkhand movement. I refer to the
554 fact that rank in Jamshedpur is so largely dependent on wealth translated into appropriate material possessions, and so little dependent on the attributes of high Hinduism or even caste membership. One may at every turn observe the subservience of devout Brahmans to those of lower caste and even to "Harijans" who hold higher positions in the company hierarchy. Prior to the Jharkhand movement the observation of rank in Jamshedpur could only lessen the tendency toward emulating high Hinduism. The aspiring Santal who was well acquainted with Jamshedpur might adopt Western clothing, an automobile or motorcycle, and a *pukha* house (one with modern facilities) rather than vegetarianism, teetotalism, and a sacred thread; he might observe that the Parsees, Europeans, and Westernized Hindus did not pay a price in rank for the lack of high Hindu attributes. But in the context of a market economy and without a political rank path to draw the Santal and other tribals together, these observations suggest individual mobility rather than a socio-cultural movement aimed at improving the rank of tribals as a group; hence without a political rank path this characteristic did not of itself produce a new solidarity. Nevertheless it seems probable that the Jamshedpur experience made the maintenance of tribal solidarity appear consistent with the attainment of superior rank.

668 A second characteristic of Jamshedpur which has favored the
467 Jharkhand movement and therefore tribal and Santal solidarity

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 467 is the extreme importance of political power in determining the outcome of labor disputes. The Santal and other tribals were strong supporters of the Tata Workers Union as long as it remained politically unaffiliated. After independence it became a Congress union, and since Congress is the major opponent of the Jharkhand party, a threat to the Jharkhand movement. At the time of my field work the Jharkhand party began the formation of a "workers association" to counter this threat. There is considerable latent support for this development because most tribals are opposed to the present leadership of the Tata Workers Union, which they regard as inattentive to their needs and biased against them. They accuse various leaders of the union of giving special preference to members of their own caste or people from their own province. Whether due to Jharkhand efforts or not, a number of special considerations for "aboriginals" have improved the economic prospects for tribals in Jamshedpur. The state government has exerted pressure on TISCO and other firms to hire "aboriginals" and to provide evidence that they are being trained for and given jobs of high pay and status. To this end TISCO is made to furnish periodic reports indicating the number of "aboriginals" employed and their positions in the company hierarchy. With TISCO's help, local tribal leaders have established an "*Ādibāsī*" Cooperative Society, a savings and loan association to which many tribals have entrusted their savings. Thus, with the help of political organization, the special status of "aboriginals" has been made to confer special benefits—some of which might possibly have been forthcoming anyway, since the welfare state ideology is dominant in India, and is backed by official tradition of special benefits to "scheduled" tribes and castes. In any case, the general context within which the Jharkhand worked

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1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 467 was at least to this extent favorable to the realization of its aims.

While the Santal industrial workers are substantially behind Jharkhand, the social schism between the elite and ordinary Santal, which is generally reflected as leaders and followers in the Jharkhand movement, is a source of disintegrative tendencies. Despite general support there are complaints that [661] the leaders are only out to further their own ends. These sentiments are reinforced by a number of well-known cases in which leaders have pocketed funds collected for the party. There is also some tendency, particularly among the city Santal, to support third parties which are militantly pro-worker, especially when the local Jharkhand candidate has little chance of winning; this is most likely to be the case where "aboriginals" are in a minority, as in the city.

668 The schism between elite and non-elite is a continuing problem for the political movement, and the success which that movement has had in entering the promising new political rank path must have accentuated the ever-present conflict between emulation of the Hindus and tribal solidarity: while clearly calling for renewed solidarity to attain political success, the movement equally demanded emulation and abandonment of distinctive characteristics to validate the status which increased political power promised. This emulation-solidarity conflict was particularly serious among the Santal elite. About them were living examples indicating that emulation of Hindus led eventually to social absorption. Furthermore they were aware of the increasing cultural and consequent social schism between themselves and the common Santal. Rank improvement by passing into the Hindu fold still constituted an alluring prospect. Furthermore, Hindu values and attitudes had been

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

• 668 so deeply internalized that even had they lost their rank value the conflict with solidarity would have persisted. But rank improvement via political success required the maintenance and even the increase of solidarity and this in turn required checking and even reversing the tendency to emulate. Since the elite are themselves the greatest emulators and those who have most internalized Hindu values, and at the same time those who have the greatest stake in political success, it is among them that the emulation-solidarity conflict is most intense.

The cultural creativity which has accompanied the Jharkhand political movement has certain characteristics which may be regarded as attempts to resolve this conflict. It may also be that the psychological tension arising from this conflict is largely responsible for the dynamism and creativity which the movement has displayed. What has been accomplished culturally may properly be termed an emergent "great tradition."[1]

[1] Redfield and Singer 1954.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

Chapter 7 The "Great Tradition"

177 One might say that the Santal have been in search of a "great
178 tradition" since the time that they conceded the social and
• 668 cultural superiority of their Hindu neighbors. Having taken
much from these neighbors, but desirous of maintaining their
identity, they decided to create a "great tradition" of their
own rather than accept the one belonging to their neighbors.
[212] There is, for example, an attempt to codify Santal traditions
in writing and even the development of a distinctive script in
[771] which to record these traditions. In place of an essentially in-
explicit religious ideology expressed in ritual, there is the de-
velopment of an explicit religious ideology with an emphasis
on morality. There is also the elaboration of literary forms
wholly unlike the unpretentious traditional ones. Paradoxically,
while these developments involve rejection of numerous Hindu
practices, they introduce fundamental beliefs and values of
Hinduism which previously had made hardly any progress
among the Santal. Thus, while distinctive traits are re-empha-
sized, the configurations and orientation of Santal culture be-
come somewhat more like those of the Hindus. However,

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

innovative patterns are also arising, particularly through the fusing of traditional and Hindu patterns.

I do not want to portray this striking cultural development as more profane than it is by giving undue emphasis to its connections with political objectives and pursuit of rank. Nevertheless, one must begin by recognizing that this is its source. As very grossly advocated by a somewhat naïve Santal industrial worker who has become a "Member of the Legislative Assembly," the movement is spoken of in the following terms: "We should not leave our religion; we should continue to use rice beer; we should have our worship at the Sacred Grove; also we should not stop eating beef. If we stop eating it our Santal caste will be gone. We will call our religion *Sarna Dhorom** and will tell everyone that our religion is *Sarna Dhorom*." Another Santal entered the conversation saying, "Yes, like Mussulman *Dhorom*, Christian *Dhorom*, so we will call ours *Sarna Dhorom*." A third Santal said, "Yes, if we say *Santal Dhorom*, that is our caste; as the Christians have a church, so our 'temple' (*mandir*; Hindi) is the Sacred Grove." The MLA brought the conversation to a close and down to "practical" matters by saying: "We will maintain our 'drama club'; we will keep our 'culture'; if we keep our 'culture' the government will give us money; if you do a drama I will bring big officers of the Jharkhand party to see."

There are sections of Jharkhand political rallies with such a concentration on culture that one might imagine himself at a festival rather than a political meeting. The local club may perform a play at such a meeting; traditional dances may be

* *Sarna* is the Munda word for "Sacred Grove" (*Jaher* in Santali); *Dhorom* is the Oriya form meaning roughly "religion."

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

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arranged by Jharkhand leaders, some of whom would themselves be ashamed to dance. So potent a political weapon is culture that the great crime of a Santal-elected official who went over to the Congress was that he wrote a pamphlet in which he argued that the Mundari languages were related to Oriya.

Though the cultural movement is intimately connected with politics, the elite who are sparking the movement are quite sincere in their cultural efforts; men are indeed usually capable of sincerely believing in that which is necessary to the pursuit of rank. The sophisticated Santal believes that he is contributing to a resurgence of tribal tradition and at the same time raising it to a higher level. And so he is. But neither the grounds on which he justifies his act nor its effect are the sufficient causes of the cultural movement. Yet despite the basically political source of its energy, the cultural movement has acquired an impetus of its own. There is honor to be gained through cultural creativity, and the Santal elite have begun to experience the pleasure of cultural innovation per se.

The distinctive traits re-emphasized in the new movement are chiefly those mentioned by the MLA whose remarks are recorded above. They are beef eating and cow sacrifice, traditional dances, drinking and offering rice beer, and worship of the traditional gods at the Sacred Grove. The low rank value of these traits makes them ideal boundary markers. These traits serve not only to bind together the Santal but are held in common with most of the tribes which support the Jharkhand movement. They are the banners under which the Jharkhanders march, and their contrast with Hindu banners is conspicuous. Unfortunately, beef eating and dancing are particularly difficult for the educated elite, so that their preaching is often better-

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

177 than their practice. For them these are the unresolvable neces-
178 sities of the new rank path. Some of these Santal whom we
• 668 met in 1957 had just begun to eat beef again; happily, one
[262] city Santal read in a magazine about the virtues of beef eating for health, and his discovery quickly diffused among the rest of the city Santal. Once I saw a young party activist who had grown up during the Jharkhand movement persuading an older Santal with a few years of education that he must take up beef eating again if he wished to preserve the Santal caste. The emphasis given to these distinctive traits serves, of course, not only to keep Santal and Hindu apart but also to narrow the gap between the elite and the ordinary Santal.

177 One of the fundamental changes being wrought in Santal
178 culture is an increased emphasis on work, study, and rank at-
539 tainment and a concomitant discouragement of "pleasure." A
668 number of recent songs like the following carry this message.

At work time I become drunk and forget my work.
At the time for study I spent my time making friends;
I forgot all about reading and writing.

Babu, boys the same age as you have become pundits at Tata school.
Oh brother in the city of Delhi they have become members of parliament.
Oh brother you were born in a long village.
Oh brother you grew up among friends.
Oh brother you have only become a pundit in divorced women.

Notice in the following song carrying a message like those above the use of un-Santal-like metaphors in the manner of the new "great tradition."

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

177 You want to reach the fruit,
178 Without effort you can't reach the higher fruit.
539 Make your mind hard!
• 668 Release your soul!
Be energetic with your body!
Then you shall reach the fruit which hangs high.

Other songs with Calypso-like Santal manner carry the message of Jharkhand, the necessity of maintaining distinctiveness, the moral-religious connection, and in some cases the new great-traditional style. Notice in particular the intermingling of these themes in these stanzas:

We are natives of this country,
Yet they are driving us out;
They are driving us from our birthplace.
Be learned, brother, be knowing, be a man.

Jai Pal Singh protects us against other castes.
Raghnath Murmu [the founder of a cultural organization] will make us learned and wise.

In the country of Dhalbhum the *Tamak* [a kind of drum] sounds.
In Hanuman's forest the Sakwa [a wild buffalo horn] sounds.
In the "aboriginal" land the deer are devouring the forest.
Sam and Supai [two Jharkhand candidates] sound the bell;
Come great Jai Pal and sound the *Sakwa* to drive the deer away.

For the man of today, *haeri haeri* [ai ai]
On a tree of trouble grows troubled fruit.
Because of sin the body is pained, *haeri haeri.*
Since we are poor we get only *matkom lathe* [a nearly inedible fruit from which the liquor *parua* is made].

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

The Santal

177 Millet we never get.
178 Day by day we starve and become desiccated, *haeri.*
Dirty grass huts, poverty, and sickness cause us to moan, *haeri.*
539 Continuous sickness follows us all our life.
• 668 Who will cure this?

Maraṅ Buru is like an *ojha* [medicine man in Santali and Hindi]
He will end this sickness.
Let us drive out this evil by applying our intelligence.
Let us drive it out with our sacred prayers.
This religion will wipe away the sin.
With the help of religion let us bid this evil go.
Then we will obtain heaven's reward, god-given love and joy.
Through religion the poverty and sickness of hell will vanish.

This last song in particular is interspersed with Oriya and [771] Sanskritic words. It also introduces heaven and hell, neither of which has a place in the traditional religion; but Maraṅ Buru, the tribal deity of the Santal, retains his place, and leaders of the Jharkhand political movement are prominent.

The shame which the elite leaders feel for the traditional "pleasure" orientation is expressed in the following song:

After drinking rice beer,
After getting drunk,
A man walks with his *dhoti* falling to the ground.
Seeing all these bad things the aboriginal brother becomes sorrowful.

177 There are several reasons why the traditional "pleasure"
178 orientation is opposed. As already suggested, it is an attribute
181 of low status in the prevailing system of caste ranking, and
668 the elite have internalized a distaste for it, especially for its

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

177 more manifest appearances. For this reason they particularly
178 oppose mixed dancing. As the songs above make plain, "pleas-
181 ure" is felt to be a detriment to study, hard work, mobility,
• 668 and the "progress" of tribals. Almost all Santal industrial workers condemn "too much pleasure," and even in remote villages it is generally felt that "pleasure" needs to be curtailed. However, it is only the educated, and not by any means all of them, who have deeply internalized this attitude and who can make it work for them. At a "fair" (*paṭa* in Hindi and Santali) more than half the Santal present said that fairs are bad; "at these fairs we only run around like dogs and spend our money"; but they were participating nevertheless and having considerable "pleasure."

[871] It is a fact that many Santal fail in school because they are lured away from their studies by the traditional "pleasure"
[461] activities. Similarly, there are some absences without leave from TISCO and some instances of coming to work drunk which are the result of too much "pleasure," particularly during festivals. Through songs, plays, speeches, and even prayers, the new cultural movement has succeeded in making most Santal feel that they ought not to over-indulge; but it would be too much to say that it has succeeded in changing the dominant motif of Santal culture. However, the commitment to personal and tribal mobility and the inhibition of "pleasure" are continually reinforced by the obvious increase in the possibilities of advancement.

[861] It is not yet common in the villages but everywhere apparent in the *bustees* and in Jamshedpur that fathers scold their children for wasting time and remind them that if they do not study they shall end up "throwing about dung" or performing other menial jobs requiring hard and undignified labor. Most

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

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177 of the young children of Santal industrial workers aspire to
178 a "sitting-down job," if not in Delhi then at least in TISCO.
555 The tension induced by the conflict between rank improvement and the pleasure complex is evident in the demeanor of the young Santal trying to resist the old siren songs of their culture. The Santal of ordinary means recognizes that life is generally short and hazardous and that the path to success is arduous and the goal uncertain of attainment. Under such circumstances it is remarkable how many Santal are committed to rank improvement.

177 The disruptive force of "envy" and associated witchcraft
178 has been attacked in two fashions. All but the most isolated
754 Santal now believe that "envy," and with it witchcraft and
871 much disease, will disappear as the Santal, especially their females, become educated. The rationale for this hope is that education will impart virtue and improve rank; how then will it be possible for the virtuous and prosperous to be envious? As the Santal point out, the "educated *diku* women do not practice witchcraft, so neither will ours once they are similarly educated."

• 668 The second anti-"envy" doctrine is more sophisticated, has
754 Great-Traditional qualities, and is a genuine example of cultural innovation. It was developed by a brilliant Santal high-school graduate, Ragnath Murmu, who lived for some time in a *bustee*, where he carried on "cultural work"; he has since retired to his native village. According to his view, there are witches who practice witchcraft because of "envy." However, they can cause sickness only in a person who has committed some sin. The solution to the problem of illness which is caused in part by witchcraft and in part by one's own sin is to live a

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 754 virtuous life and to adhere scrupulously to the traditional religious practices.

668 Ragnath Murmu is one of the founders of a cultural organization known as *Sarna Dharam Semlet'*, i.e., Sacred Grove Religious Organization. This organization, which today is a spearhead of the cultural movement, is an offshoot of the Jharkhand party. It was established before the census of 1951 for the purpose of persuading the tribals of the region to return their religion as "*Sarna.*" Just as Hindu organizations like Arya Samaj pressure for Hindu returns as a sign of national solidarity, so Semlet' was created to show the solidarity of tribals. The battle over cultural identification is waged by both sides but it is social identification which is chiefly at stake. Though Semlet' began its campaign only a short time before the 1951 census was taken, 237,310 tribals from the state of Bihar did return themselves as followers of the "*Sarna*" religion (Census [192] of India, Vol. V. Bihar, Part II, A Tables, p. 309). There is, of course, no native word in any of the tribal languages which designates their religion, and the word *Sarna*, meaning Sacred Grove in Munda, has had to be officially chosen for the purpose. Since it is not even the word for Sacred Grove in Santali or Ho, it faces further difficulties, and if it is to be widely adopted it will require a good deal of explaining, especially to the mass of non-literate Santal and Hos.

[754] Whatever its success in the census, under the leadership of Ragnath Murmu the organization has taken on a number of cultural functions, such as propagating Mr. Murmu's theory of witchcraft. While its chief ideologist is Mr. Murmu, its treasurer and secretary are TISCO workers. Among the officers only the secretary is illiterate, a deficiency for which he makes

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 up by being an ecstatic religious teacher known widely for his curing powers.

192 668 776 792 In the words of Esteemed Guru (*Guru Gomke*), a title conferred upon Ragnath Murmu by Jai Pal Singh, who is himself called Great Esteemed One (*Maraṅ Gomke*), the purpose of Semlet' "is to teach the people to live peaceably with belief in the deities." The Guru has had some success in spreading the notion that Dhormo is the one all-embracing deity of which all others are a part, a theory like that of Vedantic monism. The socially centrifugal tendency of such a theory is, however, ingeniously mitigated by deriving the word Dhormo from the Santali terms, *doho* = to protect, *Hor* = a way, and *om* = to capture; hence "where there is a way of salvation" (salvation = *mafti*; Hindi). Thus the Guru makes *Dhormo*, a deity often worshipped along with the traditional ones, a Santal one after all. There is no end to the Guru's linguistic derivations of this variety, the scope of which is indicated by his derivation of Sanskrit from Proto-Mundari on the basis of structural similarities. Indeed, he argues that "many believe Valmiki Risi himself to have been a Santal."

539 668 792 The Guru has written a very long epic-heroic play, *Kherwar Bir*, which serves as a Santal equivalent of the Mahābhārata. The word *Kherwar* is an heroic designation for Santal; *Bir* means forest in Santali. The essence of the plot is that the Santal, then known as Kherwar and the possessors of a great kingdom, lose a war with a people who have the attributes of Hindus, the victors taking many members of the royal family prisoner. The Guru deftly reverses the usual Hindu pattern by having the Santals' opponents be cannibals prepared to eat their Santal prisoners. Fortunately, a young Kherwar prince, following the call of duty in spite of great danger, succeeds in

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 792 539 both rescuing the prisoners and defeating the enemy. This play is both a parable about duty, and, like the old myth of the caste functions of the clans, a charter for present independence. In addition, the existence of such a written epic raises the rank value of Santal culture; to hear Santal praise the play is to erase all doubts about the significance of this objective. The historicity of the play is provided with archaeological support by sophisticated Santal who note that an abandoned old fort far to the north was probably the seat of the old kingdom. Less sophisticated Santal remark that the Guru did not make up the play, but that it was the result of revelation preceded by meditation, fasting, etc.

212 668 792 It is also the Guru who created the original Santal script. Numerous booklets explaining it have been distributed, and there are many Santal, particularly among the industrial workers, who can read it. Formerly all Santali writing was in Nagari, Bengali, or Roman script as developed by the missionaries. Wherever there are large gatherings today, Santal may be seen reading particularly the words to new songs in the new script. The connection of the script with solidarity is obvious to all; the Guru reports that he was asked by the former Mahārājā of Mayurbhanj to cease propagating the script because it was divisive; he claims to have replied that he would gladly do so if the Mahārājā would see to it that the Oriya script was also abandoned.

536 668 Several drama clubs have sprung up to perform *Kherwar Bir* and some other recent plays. One particularly interesting one is called *Olong*, or "Fate" (*Olong* = fate, Oriya) and concerns the schism between rich and poor. It urges magnanimity on the former and curtailment of "envy" and "pleasure" on the latter.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

538 The great task that Semlet' hopes soon to undertake, and for
• 668 which money is being collected, is to provide an authoritative text of Santal tradition written in the new script. At periodic Semlet' meetings one may observe eloquent representations of the cultural movement and its intimate connection with solidarity and the political rank path.

178 In place of traditional prayers such as: "Greetings, *Marañ*
539 *Buru*; in the name of this festival I offer you so do not allow
668 any sickness, headache, or stomach ache to come. We give to
782 you that we may remain in good health," one hears prayers more in keeping with an emergent "Great Tradition" such as the following: "Greetings, *Marañ Buru*; be kind enough and pleased to accept my bowing and greeting. I prostrate myself before you and direct my attention to you. Come down as the wind and fly like a storm. Guide me in the path of righteousness. I bow down in all directions."

668 The following excerpts from typical speeches at Semlet'
539 meetings give an "inside view" of the cultural movement and
771 its social significance:

> In one village people stopped worshipping in the Sacred Grove and began to follow a Hindu sect which makes no offerings but only prays. Within three years they fell ill in every house. . . . Some "medicine man" from another village told them it is because you stopped worshipping in the Sacred Grove, so they returned to their old ways. Other people's religions will not make us strong. We should worship properly, then we can raise our religion so many will respect it.

> In ancient times it was said, and our "aboriginal" leaders also say, Sarna is our religion. The *diku* say our religion is Hindu. Then

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 539 771

what is our religion? If we celebrate with Hindus then we will soon be marrying them.

We will search out our traditions and publish our "precepts" [*bidhan* = precepts; Hindi]. . . . Many people are ashamed to "*Johar*" [a Santal greeting used for both persons and deities] at the Sacred Grove for fear the *dikus* will see. If we do not believe in our religion we will become Hindu or Christian. Now the *dikus* are trying to lure us away from our religion, so we must follow our Semlet' and all Santal will follow. We have to raise ourselves by religion and worshipping at the Sacred Grove. If we do not raise and support our religion we shall not progress in the "socio-political" [*somaj rajnita*; Hindi] sphere. This Semlet' is not different than the traditional religion. In the village of X, 300 people gathered for Semlet'; at that time an SDO [Sub-Divisional Officer] also came and that *diku* said, "this religion is not bad, it is a good thing."

Now we should rise like other people. The traditional religion is good but now we are following others' religion. We have no feeling for our caste and religion and that is why others are in high positions. If we have no unity and organization then others will have no respect for our caste. . . . Bihar police arrested twelve men for religious work. Now also they don't allow us to do religious work, but we must maintain our cow sacrifice at the Sacred Grove. Literacy and knowledge can help maintain our religion. When we spoke with the police who arrested the Santal they asked us for a written record of our religion. Then I said you can go village to village and ask people. Others drive hundreds and hundreds of cattle down the road and slaughter them and the police don't stop them. We sacrifice a cow every five years. This is our religion offering to Cando. . . . Other people try to destroy our religion but nobody should destroy any religion. I have seen in the constitution of India in the 25th chapter that no one shall be allowed to destroy a re-

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 539 771 ligion. . . . Some literate people also are leading us in a bad direction. In eating and clothing we often follow the *diku* way; we are departing from the way of our own society.

177 178 796 The final cultural manifestation to be discussed brings us back to the Durga Puja anecdote with which this chapter began. In the spirit of solidarity every effort is being made to prevent attendance at and participation in Hindu ceremonies. One of the dangers inherent in attendance and participation is the emulation of Hindu ways and the development of Hindu identification. The second danger stems from the manner of Santal participation, i.e., the Santal tendency to engage in mixed dancing, to become drunk, and in general to publicly display those forms of "pleasure" which are the attributes of low rank. The third danger bears a resemblance to the objection voiced by the city Santal, Mr. F., that the Santal are cheated by the clever *dikus*. No doubt there is some cheating, but what is really objectionable is that on such occasions considerable money is spent on "pleasure" and is thus not available for the serious business of rank improvement.

184 668 796 A more positive attempt to increase solidarity is the recent effort to get all Santal villages to celebrate their festivals simultaneously and to set the dates for such occasions so that they will not coincide with Hindu ceremonies. This effort has had a limited success in Mayurbhanj but has not been adopted generally because (1) the traditionally important visiting and reciprocity made possible by non-simultaneous ceremonies would have to be sacrificed, and (2) industrial workers now attending those of their own festivals which are held at the same time as Hindu ones on "free time" (permissible leave periods during which they are paid) would have to take leave without pay or forego all ceremonies. In principle, however,

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

184 all agree that the recent proposal for simultaneity is one that
668 ought to be implemented.
796 Mr. F., the acculturated city Santal raised by a Brahman family, was essentially opposed to attendance at the Durga Puja
668 festival in Jamshedpur because of its danger to solidarity. His
796 own acculturation and assimilationist tendencies were acquired
[115] before the opening of the political rank path. Today, despite some anxiety regarding the practice of certain distinctive practices, he is among the leaders of the movement for social solidarity and cultural separatism. No wonder that he should have complained, even though in error, about the passage in the Santal ethnography which seemed to him to say that "Santal only improve when in contact with Hindus."

668 The new solidarity fostered by political democracy is a new solidarity and not simply a return to traditional solidarity, at least for the immigrant industrial workers. It is they who are in the forefront of the movement, and there is no doubt that they are now bound to their people much more tightly than heretofore. But this does not make a *bustee* into a native village; it does not make marriage into a bond between kinship groups and villages; it does not eliminate the separate income and individual mobility of factory employment. In short, it does not recreate the traditional social basis for traditional solidarity. Instead it creates a new direct bond with all the Santal and to a somewhat lesser degree with all other tribals of the area. This new bond rests ultimately on the somewhat tenuous opportunity for the Santal and other tribals to function as a successful interest group. Given enough time, perhaps the new "likenesses" will be of enough force to hold the Santal and other tribals together in spite of change in the avenues of mobility.

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1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

the emulation-solidarity conflict. Nevertheless, the cultural load tended to increase, particularly in unaltered Hindu attributes of rank value.

The new political rank path of the 1930's, with its need for increased solidarity, created enough pressure through the emulation-solidarity conflict to generate a cultural movement. Not only were serious efforts made to curtail borrowing and to abandon emulative practices, but various emulative characteristics previously absorbed were naturalized. While distinctive traits of low rank value received new emphasis, the "Great Tradition" aspect of the movement imported essentially Hindu orientations into the culture, naturalizing them by means of innovative combination with traditional customs. The most striking examples of this have been the creations of "Esteemed Guru."

As an aid to thought the major principles of the RCS as applied to encysted societies are succinctly listed below. However, this condensed statement has required some obvious oversimplification and is not meant as a substitute for the more discursive discussion which precedes it.

*The RCS as Applied to Encysted Societies**

1. The "cultural load" of the encysted society is inversely related to its solidarity and its ability to resist assimilation.
2. Rank concession produces a tendency to emulate; since emulation increases the cultural load, rank concession is also destructive of solidarity.
3. Emulation is likely to be of the differential variety.
4. A dominantly economic rank path decreases solidarity.

* All of the following propositions should be qualified by *ceteris paribus*.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

XIII. ADDITIONAL ACCOUNT BY OLD JUGIA

Because of the harassing of the Dekos and the distress through lack of food after we had crossed the Ajae river, we were, as time passed, spread about towards the North and the East, on the hills in the North East right up to the Ganges river. At that time there was only forest, and here and there Bhûyas[1] and on the hill tops Mar Muṇḍas[2]. The Muṇḍas they also call Săurias. The Bhûyas and the Mar Muṇḍas were the landowners at that time. They allowed us to take up land in peace, and they took a very small amount of rent from us. Under them we had no distress at all. But as time passed, the Dekos entered trading, and finally they settled down as money-lenders. They also became the money-lenders of the landlords. The landlords borrowed money and clothes from them and gave the country to them as security. In this way the Deko money-lenders got the country from them by fraud, they themselves became the landlords, and the real landlords became paupers and became like us. The Deko landlords living at the foot of the hill country also took possession of what belonged to the Mar.

We cleared the hill country and the forest country at our expense for the new landlords, after they had become money-lenders, and they gradually increased the land-rent for us. The money-lenders give us very small amounts, and they take very much. The crops of the year they take away from us, all of it, and we get through life by again incurring debts with them. However much we pay back, still it is not cleared off. If they are not satisfied with the crops of the year, they drive our cattle away; and if they are not content even by this, they make us, wife and children, serve with them as slaves for a couple of half-seers (of rice). At that time there were no magistrates; to whom could we complain? Afterwards Deko police came in; but these dismiss our cases, taking the white pice of their own race. We had very great distress. With the whole country we became bewildered.

Then different rumours arose. First this: The two Lag Lagin[3] snakes are coming; they will swallow people. To remove the adverse influence men of five villages gathered and walked about to five other villages, during one night, being religiously very abstinent. To our village those of five villages came, one man to every separate house. In the village

[1] A semi-Hinduized caste, living here and there near the Santals in the northern parts of the Santal Parganas. [2] A Dravidian tribe living on the hills [3] Lag Lagin, a Bengalised form of Nag Nagin, a pair of fabulous snakes.

[776]

2; Skreforud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

173
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street outside the house of the village headman they danced round, drumming the kettle-drum. At their waist they had tied wooden bells and small metal bells. As they were swaying, these made an awful noise. Two young unmarried men had taken on the sacred thread of the twice-born, and they were carrying about two very small ploughs, on to which sindur had been smeared, these were of Nim and Bael and put into a small flat basket. When they had finished wandering to their five villages, they gathered us of our five villages in the open plain outside the last village. There they offered Bael leaves, sun-dried rice, and oil and sindur in the name of Lag Lagin. After this they that were coming along taught us songs, before they left; then having put the sacred thread of the twice-born on two unmarried young men of ours and having handed the two ploughs to them, they went to their respective homes. Thereupon we also in the same way wandered round to five villages. When we had finished wandering we gave the two ploughs over to the people of the five villages that we had wandered round to; we turned the sacred thread of the twice-born to two unmarried young men of theirs; we offered in the name of Lag Lagin, and having taught them the songs we came home. When we had reached home, we men plastered the courtyards with cow-dung, and we brought one large vessel with water. Our women, that is to say, mothers of children, did not put their feet down on the ground during the whole night that we were away; they had put cow-dung down near the bedsteads, and putting their feet on this they sucked their children.

After this they again started a rumour, viz., that women who had got the same number of children should exchange vows, two and two; the pair should give each other clothes, and all should eat and drink. Who knows for what reason. Perhaps in order that all should become related and then be of one mind, so that if an insurrection or the like arose, they should not tell tales about each other, and if anything happened, it might remain hidden.

Those two rumours went round. Again one other matter was rumoured, viz., a buffalo-cow is coming. Where she may find grass in the village street outside somebody's house, there she will graze and lie down. She will not get up until the people of this house have all died. Hearing this the people of the whole country dug their village streets clean.

Then a rumour about the Doms was started, viz.: In the Ganges river a Dom touched a golden boat, thereby the boat sank, therefore they will kill all Doms. Fearing this the Doms were running about like forest deer; they put on clothes and ornaments like Santals, and stayed in Santal houses.

Then it was rumoured, viz.: In the Layo fort a Subę[4] has been born by an unmarried girl; let all people go there to hunt. The Layo fort[5] is to the west of Hazaribagh. Some men went; they saw the Subę and together with him they also hunted through the Kanchon forest. They brought the deer they had killed together to the same place and cut them

[4] Subę (or Subę Thakur) is used about an inspired leader. [5] The Layo gar was far to the West from the places where most of the insurrection occurred.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

173
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up. And the people brought with them one leaf each to receive their portion. They counted these leaves; they saw how many thousands country people had come together. The Subs paid all the expenses. When we were about to disperse, the Subs said to us: We shall hunt over the Ṭir mountain, that is near to Deoghar; assemble there. But for some reason or other they did not hunt there.

After this it was rumoured, viz.: Some people, who knows who, are coming to kill the Dekos. As for you, at the end of the village street hang up the hide of a bullock and a pair of flutes, that they may know that you are Santals; otherwise they will kill you with the others. Fearing this we hung these things up in every village.

Then it was heard, viz.: In Bhognaḍi in the Paṛ country[9] a Subs Ṭhakur has appeared. Hearing this the people of the country commenced to go, each taking with them one half-seer of sun-dried rice and the milk of one cow. There they saw that they had built an altar, and that they had put up a fence round it. In the middle Ṭhakur was sitting in the shape of Sido of that village. Throwing themselves down on their face before him the people of the country worshipped him, and they brought rice and milk together in his name at the same place. Then a police head-constable from the courts came. He said to them: What order have you? out with it, I wish to see your authority. Then Sido said: Look here is my authority, and with a clasp-knife he killed him. Then the insurrection commenced. When they heard that they had killed the head-constable, the soldiers came. At the Kŏcpara market place they fought against Sido and his brother Canhu and the country people. The soldiers were vanquished; therefore the courage of Sido and Kanhu and their party greatly increased. Then Sido and Kanhu gave an order: The landlords and usurers we shall kill every one of them, and the other Dekos we shall drive away to the other side of the Ganges; the reign will be ours. Then the people of the country became raving mad; many Subs Ṭhakurs appeared.

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Now there happened fighting at Pakaur and Mohespur; here also the soldiers were vanquished. After this Maṇi Pargana from Jamoipani and Ram Maṅjhi from Baromasia in Nankar became Subs. With a host of the country people these two plundered Naranpur and Moluti. Binud Maṅjhi from Tilabani in Belparta became a Subs, and with a host of country people he plundered Deocha and Gunpura. At Gunpura the Santals were vanquished. Thereupon they had a fight at the Nangolia police station. There a great number of Santals were killed. From there they fought at Laubaria on the other side of the Mor river. Here a great many soldiers fell, and a European also was killed. And Santals were shot dead in heaps. The Santals could not prevail; the Santals ran away into the Saptola forest and the Satbehor hill. Here they remained for about two months, in the months of Asin and Kartik (from the middle of September to the middle of November). Here the

[9] Most of the places mentioned by Jugis may be found on the large maps of the Santal Parganas. The Paṛ country is in the north-eastern part of this district.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

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Santals plundered each other, because of the distress through lack of food. Thereupon the Europeans surrounded us; they drove us out, and to the villages Sikarpur and Ramkhuri.

Us men they caught and took every one of us to Dhasnia, the village of the landlord, that is to say, so many as they caught. Having kept us here for something like one month they brought us to Kumrabad near the Mor river. At that time the Europeans cozened us, they said to us: Why will you suffer? Tell who the Subę are; then we shall set you free now this moment. Then the country people told who they were. The Europeans caught the Subę; some of them they hanged there, and some they transported to an island[7]. A few they also set free. Sido had in the meantime died in the fighting, and Kanhu and his followers they caught afterwards. They hanged Kanhu and a couple others, and some, who knows how many, they transported to an island. Ram Mańjhi and Binud escaped. The Lieutenant Governor came and pacified us the people of the country; we returned to our respective villages.

During the insurrection we suffered severely. From Asar (middle of June to middle of July) for fully three months we lived in the hills at the foot of trees; rain was continually pouring down on us, and we were nearly dying from hunger, because of the guiles of the Subę Thąkurs. During the insurrection many of us lost our cattle; therefore when we returned to our villages, we suffered much distress. There were no plough-cattle, there was nothing to eat, and the Dekos mocked us very irritatingly. We had again to fall into the hands of the same money-lenders. Some people unrighteously became rich during the insurrection by unlawfully taking possession of other people's cows and buffaloes.

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From after the insurrection the Europeans have appeared in the Santal country. First Telbor Saheb was our magistrate. At that time he judged our cases without charging money; but nowadays much money has to be paid in court-cases: the writers take a couple of rupees, the muktiąr (pleader-babus) take earnest-money in advance, stamps have to be put on, and if the orderlies are not given a little, they push you straight away when you come, and if you do not go and have trouble three-four times, the case is not settled. This we feel a distress; otherwise the Europeans judge well.

[7] I. e. the Andamans.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

All these however lead us nowhere. And all that we can guess in the absence of more reliable evidence is that there is no independent clan amongst the Santals bearing the name of *Kharwars* or *Kherwals*, and that perhaps some Santals when questioned by Man and Col. Dalton gave their clan as *Karwar* or *Kedoar* as the alternative of *Kharwars*, the traditional name for Santals, before they came to Saont or Sant in Midnapore.

It should be mentioned here that Risley in his *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, gives the following equivalent of the general name Santal viz. *Saontar*, *Kharwar*, or *Safa-Hòr* and mentions *Kharwars* or *Safa-Hor* as 'sub-tribes' as well, but not as a sept (clan) name. We should add that the very name *Safa-Hòr* is not now much understood by the Mayurbhanj Santals. But we have very reliable evidence[1] to say that there was, in 1871, a movement in the Santal Parganas known as the *Kharwar movement* when some Santals declared themselves as *Safa-Hòr* (the pure men), after eschewing fowls, pigs and intoxicating liquor, but taking "gañja," (hemp, Canabinis Sativa) and tried to bring it on a line with Hindû practices. It led at a time to some local ferment and had also a political aspect. But beyond

1. Ref. *Dt. Gazetteer*, Santal Parganas, 1910, p. 145.

St Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

175 668 614 this we do not know anything and no light is available to assert that *Kharwar* was ever a clan name.

174 101 668 It should, however, be noted here that the Mayurbhanj Census Report, 1931, (Vol. I, p. 215) opines that "the present Santals are the descendants of the section of the tribe who became followers of Bhagirath (the leader of the Kharwar movement)—a Santal who endeavoured to start a movement to turn out the Sahibs and Zemindars out of the country and who was tried for sedition in 1871 and imprisoned at Bhagalpur where he died."

Gòndwars

114 614 The Santals of Mayurbhanj when questioned invariably answered that they were twelve clans, but they made no mention of the *Bedea* (supposed to be lost) and made up for the deficiency by mentioning *Gòndwars*. This was remarkable as in no other account do we come across such a name. In course of searching enquiries also we could not meet any *Gòndwar*. [The Mayurbhanj Census Report (1931, Vol. I, p. 192) also mentions the clan.]

614 563 829 The general belief among the Santals is that *Gòndwars* occupy a low position among them as they are supposed to be a cross between *Gònd-Muṇḍà* and *Santals*. There is in existence in Mayurbhanj a class of "Hansdak's" called "Gòndwar-Hansdak's" and they are considered distinctly low in the esti-

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

They would recall that in their traditions and institutes it was clearly stated that the early Santals (known as *Kharwars* then) had helped Ram Chandra to win the battle of Lanka against Ravana. In huge Santal rallies (held to declare themselves as Hindus) such speeches were heard, "Sri Ram Chandra used bows and arrows as we do. Sri Krishna was dark like us and played on the lute and tended cattle as we do. Why are we not Hindus?. We are." One irresistibly felt that here was the heart-throb of the Santal for centuries.

All these synchronised with a new awakening amongst the educated and enlightened Santals which culminated in the formation of organisations to maintain their social and political interests. One such, the *Hor Malto Marang Sabha*, was formed as early as 1932 on the initiative of E. S. Hoernle, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner of the Santal Parganas. In course of time, it exerted a real influence on the government and the tribal people. The part that it played in safeguarding the rights of Santal tenants of Monghyr in the Bihar Tenancy Act was a creditable one as it secured his right against the disposal of his holding to *mahajans*. Gradually, however, a political programme came to the fore and such a bias was noticeable in the Adibasi Mahasabha, soon to follow at Ranchi. It sought to unify, at least the Proto-Australoids like the Santals, Mundas, Kharias, the Ho etc. in a

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

668 common platform. They long for the development of their distinctive culture—a pre-Dravidian Jharkhand.

177 648 [641] Now with Independence, and its concomitant adult franchise, things are undergoing a rapid transformation. The Santal, along with the other aboriginals, like his more civilised brethren has got to handle a ballot paper. They see that the more advanced Indians are trying to have a better standard of life and are rushing in for more and more of education, for amenities of life hitherto denied to the hill and jungle-folk. Development plans of the government, Community projects, programmes of tribal uplift are gradually throwing open to them roads, motor lorries, schools and fineries. Planes buzz over them, radios blare and torch lights flash. With all the glare of modernism in their eyes, is it a wonder that these aboriginals, so long living idyllic lives in the backwoods of songs and dances are puzzled at the threshold of a New World?

177 So long the seeds of a new order were in the air. Old sets of value now seemed disturbed. In [184] Bolpur area, one could notice new house-types with [342] windows and furniture, they lacked in the past. [352] Santals were found chewing betels, drinking less and [27] taking to milk and tea and cigarettes. Many have [262] given up beef like the Hindus, even buffalo meat and pork have gone off their menu. The old Santal

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

SANTAL PARGANAS

The old Santal would not grow potato due to their conservative instincts even when Pontet asked them, now they grow it along with tomato. The women now wear mill-made saris and in the urban areas of Santal Parganas, they seem indistinguishable from their Hindu sisters, because in fairs and rallies, they generally dress alike. Some widows, it has been seen at Bolpur, dress themselves in white. It is interesting to hear that in some areas, there is lesser divorce. And due to the impact of new ideas women's right in inheritance is being slowly recognised by the state and the society through indirect legal fictions.

With ideas of reform in the atmosphere, some acting as disintegrating forces, others operating on a constructive basis, it was no surprise to us to come across a manifesto signed by some prominent educated Santals of Bengal and some parts of Bihar calling upon their brethren of Midnapore, Bankura, Manbhum, Singbhum and other areas to engage in social reforms for the maintenance of their tribal honour. It stated that the Santals had firmly resolved that:

1. No Santal, man or woman, should drink *Pochoi* (rice-beer) in shops as the tribe had been ruined by drink while the grog-shop owners and *mahajans* were becoming rich. Temperance would help the Santals financially.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

2. Carrion should not be eaten. The signatories refer to this custom with feelings of shame.

3. Santals should not dance or sing anywhere except in their houses or villages. The manifesto reminds the tribe that the Europeans, Hindusthanis, the eastern hill-tribes sing and dance, but they avoid the hill-sides and public places. The ancient Santals had no public dancing.

4. Force should not be resorted to without reason as it slackens the marriage tie and gives rise to various vices.

5. Santals should wear coarse cloth and their women should give up wearing glass-bangles.

During my last visit to Mayurbhanj, I found the air thick with these ideas, specially among the educated Santals and there was a noticeable tendency to give up dancing and singing in public. It became clear to us that aboriginal sets of value and philosophy of life were undergoing a perceptible change. Times are gone when the tribes joined with the rest of the population in their pujas and festivals as in the past. To a discerning eye, this ban has robbed the tribes of the *joie de vivre* to a great extent and the infiltration of political ideas plus a realisation of their rather poor economic life, has cast a pall of gloom even on the denizens of forests, hill-tops and wide expanses of laterite soil,

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

the habitat of the hitherto happy and care-free children of nature.

The process has been continuing for some time past: but its speed has accelerated in recent times. The anthropologist sighs for the good old days. A Maharaja, with a preponderance of aboriginals in his state (before Independence) regretted to the author that something was out of tune with the aboriginals. This was before the liquidation of princely states. We are living in fast changing times. He has since lived to see at least one of his aboriginal subjects holding ministerial portfolios.

We cannot rightly evaluate the social and political changes brought about by the mighty forces at work, because, as the saying goes, the kettle does not seem to boil when stared at. Otherwise, seen from the angle of history with a long vision, things would seem to be revolutionary indeed.

Whither the aboriginals then? This brings us to the vexed question of Civilisation and the aboriginals. One of the paradoxes of modern times is that civilisation, as we understand the term, has been considered by some social thinkers, as a questionable blessing to the aboriginal. Others, who have not gone so far, have advised a very cautious approach in the programme of their uplift and reforms. They include Dr. Rivers, the late Sarat Chandra Roy, Dr. Hutton and many other eminent anthropologists.

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

women had no notion of the market price of their resin and were quite content to be paid in this way. The same man had been dealing with that village for many years, and he must have made tremendous profits. Furthermore, on this particular occasion my companion, who was himself a sharp-witted *Deku*, soon realized that the scales were heavily tipped in the trader's favour. On this being pointed out, the latter decamped before his customers were aware of the reason for his haste. One finds also that it is, or has been until very recently, customary for the cultivator in Bengal to pay sums of money in excess of the legal rent to his landlord. The Santal is one of the worst sufferers from this practice, and he continues to pay more than he should for the sake of peace, even when he has been made aware of the fact.

Santals have not been caught up into the political activities of the last thirty years, for the Congress or nationalist movement is represented locally by those whom they regard as their worst enemies. They have shared some of the excitement engendered during periods of Mass Civil Disobedience, though their own contribution is liable to express itself in unorthodox forms. During the first such movement, in 1920–21, word spread that Gandhi rule had begun and it was Gandhi's order to boycott everything white-coloured. In some places Santals slaughtered large numbers of their poultry in consequence, and in one or two instances even goats and sheep were slain. Their political education has advanced since, and the disillusion which followed their "sacrifice" ensured that there would be no repetition of such tactics. The next great Disobedience movement, in 1930, made more impression largely because on that occasion the Congress programme stressed the boycott of the licensed liquor shops. The Santals welcomed this aspect of the programme, not from any zeal for temperance, but because they soon came to see from experience that the government staff available for enforcing the excise laws was hopelessly inadequate to its task. The practice of illicit distilling, which had previously been held in check by respect for the law, became widespread. Later the extension of the franchise under the Government of India Act of 1935 has shown them that their vote has power. Some of the more politically conscious, infected by the communal situation and influenced by the demand for a separate aboriginal province in Bihar, consider it a grievance that Santals are counted among the "Scheduled castes" on the electoral roll, and think they should be granted separate representation.

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

doubtful whether the concept of monotony has any place in a Santal's mind. His love of a *porob*, or festival, is a byword in the tribe, and it is fostered by many occasions in the Santal calendar as well as by opportunities for "seeing", as they say, Hindu festivals. Some of these gatherings bring together the Santals from great distances. One of the most remarkable in the area takes place on the outskirts of Sarenga at the time of the Lakshmi Puja, at the full moon of the Bengali month of *Kartik* (October-November). This is a Hindu festival, and it is kept with due pomp and ceremony by the family of the local landlord, who is of a mercantile caste. This family built up the celebration by inviting their Santal tenants to come and dance on a field on the village boundary. For many years it has been of more than local significance. Villagers from ten to fifteen miles away turn up in force, and some come from much greater distances. Until the year 1930 they used to dance and sing throughout the night, and on one occasion a missionary counted over five hundred large drums. In the following year a small but determined group of Santal reformers, one of whose aims was to stop their womenfolk from dancing in public, practically brought the gathering to a standstill, but it was revived in 1934 in the modified form in which it continues. At about noon the air begins to resound to the beating of the drums as parties of villagers make their way along the roads and jungle tracks and approach the scene of the gathering. From the four corners of the compass they converge on the open field, men and women in festive attire, the women especially resplendent in new *saris* with gaily designed borders, their hair bedecked with flowers and their arms heavy with ornaments. The drumming intensifies as new parties arrive and more and more lines of dancers are formed. Finally the crescendo of sound from the drums batters on the ear-drums of the bystanders, and even at a distance of four miles it conveys an impression of continuous thunder in the sky. Then the clamour dies away as gradually as it began, and by nine o'clock the field is quiet once again. Since the night dancing was stopped the numbers have diminished slightly. Most of the parties return to their own villages and continue the dance there.

The weeks are enlivened by visits to the local markets. One of the entries in Babulal's record relates to a market day during the early hot weather: "Today was market day. From a very early hour everyone was preparing to go to market. It is very hot at the present time, and if we do not go early the

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

797 743

dealt with, it is probable that the chief limitation to its usefulness is still to be found in the ideas of the people, who regard it too often as a last resort. A further handicap is that it is a great upheaval in the life of a family if they have to take a patient to hospital, involving themselves in severe economic loss. Nevertheless, the influence of the hospital grows steadily and chiefly by the advocacy of those who have themselves been patients.

797 668

One significant movement of reform within the Santal community showed clearly how the influence of missions has been working. It was an apparently spontaneous movement among the Santals of Midnapore and Bankura, but it coincided with a period of nationalist activity in the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930, from which the Santals held aloof. In spite of their detachment, they were ripe to listen to propaganda. In the Sarenga area the three most prominent leaders had all received their education at the boys' boarding school and they had subsequently been trained there as village school teachers. At the time none of them was a Christian and neither in public nor in private did they indicate that their thoughts had ever turned towards accepting the Christian faith. These three men gathered round them a small band of helpers who, with great enthusiasm and at considerable sacrifice, went round the countryside and summoned mass meetings of the Santals to hear them. At some of the gatherings the missionary at Sarenga was invited to preside and to speak, largely it seemed because they were anxious for the government to realize that the movement was in no way directed against established authority. They urged the following reforms: firstly, a general tightening of the authority of the village officials in order to safeguard the basis of family life and reduce the number of broken marriages—the officials were urged to set the tone of Santal life by their example; secondly, abstention from drinking spirits and from drinking rice beer, except for ritual purposes and at festivals; thirdly, the prohibition of the large gatherings where women danced in public so that many Hindus gathered to watch them. Dancing should be carried on only in their own villages. This modest programme roused considerable excitement and opposition. The reformers discovered that the elders did not like to be told what was their duty, and the mass of unthinking youths became resentful. For the most part the reformers relied on persuasion, and at several meetings they succeeded in having resolutions passed in favour of the reforms. They were goaded into direct action when they saw that in spite of resolutions public opinion did not favour the

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

797 cancellation of the great Lakshmi Puja gathering at Sarenga.
• 668 They put out pickets and for one year by this means they secured its abandonment; the following year it took place with small numbers attending, which have since increased. The one permanent memorial of the movement, however, is in connection with this gathering, for whereas formerly it used to continue throughout the night, it now starts earlier in the day and the crowds disperse as evening comes on. In every other respect the reformers were disappointed. Two of the three leaders became disillusioned about the possibility of reform from within; their teaching took on a new note. One of them in a speech pointed to the example of the Karen people of Burma of whom he had been reading, and in due course these two presented themselves for Baptism.

797 The proposed reforms were "puritan" in character. There was
181 nothing specifically Christian about them, and indeed they were exactly similar to those advocated by many movements among Santals and others that have been influenced by Hinduism. A dislike of puritanism is one of the reasons why Christianity has not made more headway. Santals frequently object that when they become Christian they have to give up their *raska*. An old preacher wrote: "It would be good if people kept their daughters at home, for then dancing at festivals would come to an end and words of religion could enter people's ears and stick. I have visited many villages and still do so. Folk do not wish to enter the new Way because they will have to give up sin. They say: 'Yes, religion is good, but there is no pleasure in it. There is no joy apart from drinking beer and spirits; whether at births or marriages there could be no jollification.'" Unlike some other missions, we in Bankura have not asked for a pledge of total abstinence as a prerequisite of Baptism, but in practice many of the Christians tend to talk as though drunkenness is the greatest sin as it is certainly the most conspicuous failing of the Santals. Apart from the rights and wrongs of total abstinence propaganda among primitive people, Christians are normally debarred from sharing in the village festivals that afford the chief opportunities of communal revelry with its accompaniments of drinking and dancing. Although there has never been any preaching against dancing in the area, its association with the festivals and the tribal cult is sufficient to discourage it among the Christians. It is not surprising, therefore, that the lives of the Christians, who are cut off from sharing in the traditional manifestations of tribal rejoicing, appear colourless to the heathen